

## **Battlefields to Burial Grounds: Recording Indiana's Cultural Resources from the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812**

In 1996 Congress enacted legislation for the Revolutionary War/War of 1812 Historic Preservation Study. The program, modeled after the Civil War Battlefield Program of 1990, was eventually funded in 2000. Designed to identify sites associated with the Revolutionary War or War of 1812, the National Park Service assigned the study to the Cultural Resources Geographic Information Services and the American Battlefield Protection Program, which worked with an advisory committee of scholars. As a result, 2,800 events were identified for both wars. That number was later reduced to 786 of primary historical significance in the United States (National Park Service 2001). The goal of the program became to not only survey battlefields, but also associated historic properties. From there, the program will foster the protection of surviving battlefields and associated historic properties by providing guidelines for local, state, and federal planning.

As is stated in a National Park Service publication, “no single government agency, organization, or person can preserve this nation’s battlefields alone. Together we can. The American Battlefield Protection Program is committed to working with its many partners to save these remarkable places of American history (American Battlefield Protection Program 1996:4).” The National Park Service contracted with the Indiana State Historic Preservation Office (Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology [DHPA]) to complete the survey and documentation of the majority of Indiana’s identified sites. Indiana has five battle sites: Fort Harrison (Vigo County), Fort Wayne (Allen County), Mississinewa (Grant County), Tippecanoe (Tippecanoe County), and Vincennes, (Knox County). Indiana has four “associated historic properties:” Fort Harrison, Fort Wayne, Fort Sackville and Vincennes, and Prophetstown. The DHPA staff members were responsible for recording and surveying all of the chosen Indiana battlefields and associated historic sites with the exception of the ones in Vincennes, which were documented by the National Park Service (NPS) staff of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.



The Tippecanoe Battlefield in Indiana is so significant that it was designated a National Historic Landmark.

Several staff from the Archaeology and Survey and Registration sections of the DHPA attended extensive training sessions (covering required documentation levels and techniques, GPS [global positioning system] techniques, and more) held by the National Park Service in Vincennes, Indiana for a week in 2001, and then began the actual work to complete the surveys. Compared to some other states also in the project, Indiana had relatively few sites to record, but this research, fieldwork, and documentation (combined with the training) to meet the American Battlefield Protection Program’s standards, took many months to complete.

### **RESEARCH**

Extensive research was completed for each of the Indiana sites which had been chosen. The researchers drew upon records and primary sources available at the state level,

and particularly at the local level. Contacts were made with local historical societies, libraries, local governmental offices (such as surveyors) and landowners, with the goal of finding as much information as possible for the individual historic properties. Items such as historic (and modern) maps, books, land ownership records, photographs, postcards, archaeological records, State and National Register documents, and more were reviewed. Information gleaned from these types of sources provided the researchers with valuable documentation to combine with the field research and investigations.

## FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

A critical component of this type of project is the actual fieldwork. The DHPA staff investigated each of their assigned locations during the project. Field investigations consisted of physically locating the relevant sites and recording them through GPS (Global Positioning System) technology, mapping, and photography. This type of documentation is critical in determining the current physical integrity of the sites, their state of preservation, any potential threats to the properties, and their potential eligibility to the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures and the National Register of Historic Sites and Structures. At several of the Indiana properties in the project, archaeological and other types of investigations and studies have taken place in the past.



DHPA staff member Amy Johnson using GPS technology to record a location related to Fort Harrison in Vigo County.

## DOCUMENTATION

The required, specific types and levels of documentation for this project were detailed and standardized. Once the research and fieldwork was completed, then began the process of summarizing all the information that had been gathered over many months. Geographic Information System (GIS) software was used to compile the digital data regarding preliminary site boundaries, proposed potential National Register boundaries, photo points, and more. Based on research and fieldwork, maps were generated showing troop movements and positions, battle locations, associated historic property locations, and other relevant features. Photographs and slides were developed and properly labeled. Hard copies of the survey forms and many documentation sources were organized and sent to the NPS as well as the maps, photographs and other required data.



Documenting the current level of preservation of commemorative properties such as this, the George Rogers Clark Memorial in Vincennes, was an important part of this project.

The final study report regarding this project is now available for the public to access at <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/abpp/>. Working together, this type of project fosters additional appreciation for our collective past, and preserves the information for the future. The goals of a historic preservation study such as this fit perfectly within the goals for preservation and archaeology

established in Indiana's Cultural Resources Management Plans (Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology 1998, 2005). In discussing the possibilities for preservation of these types of resources, it has been stated that "the ultimate purposes of battlefield survey, documentation, and

mapping are preservation and education. There are no magic solutions for preserving battlefields [and associated historic properties], only a range of alternatives that must be mixed and matched in ways that are appropriate for each specific site and setting" (Lowe 2004). Our staff was pleased to assist in this important project, and contribute to the further understanding of, and appreciation for, the resources related to these two wars so critical in the development of our state and nation. It is our hope that the information that was gathered will help in the continued efforts to preserve and interpret these sites for future generations.

Planning has already begun in a number of ways to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812. State collaborative meetings have been taking place among various organizations, and local communities such as Vincennes (e.g., <http://www.spiritofvincennes.org/1812/index.html>) have, for example, created special commissions to commemorate the historical events and places from the war. If you are interested in this important period of the past, why not volunteer and become involved in the commemorative planning, as well as the preservation related to the sites from the War of 1812? Together, we can all continue to learn about, and appreciate, these critical important times in the history of our nation and state.

*Compiled (2004, updated 2009) by Amy Johnson, Senior Archaeologist and Archaeology Outreach Coordinator, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology.*

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Unless otherwise stated, photographs were taken by Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology staff.